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STATE FOR AF C. THOMPSON  
STATE ALSO FOR AF/S AND AF/PD

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [ZA](#) [ZI](#)

SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE ELECTIONS: ZAMBIA HIDES BEHIND SADC

REF: A. LUSAKA 0287

[1](#)B. 07 LUSAKA 0963

Classified By: Ambassador Carmen Martinez for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (C) During an April 9 meeting, Zambian Minister of Information and Government Spokesman Mike Mulongoti told DCM and PAO that the Zambian government (GRZ) would not be making public statements on the Zimbabwean election. As SADC President the Zambian government (GRZ) could neither comment on the Zimbabwean elections nor call on the Zimbabwean authorities to release election results because it would be seen as speaking not for Zambia but for the group. According to Mulongoti, President Mwanawasa and the rest of the GRZ will continue to defer to South African President Mbeki whom SADC has given the "remit and mandate" to monitor and assess the Zimbabwean election. Furthermore, Mulongoti noted that any Zambian comments would be correctly interpreted by Harare as meddling in another sovereign country's internal affairs.

[1](#)2. (C) Mulongoti shared his personal views candidly. In a chiding tone, he blamed western powers for creating an intransigent and emboldened Mugabe by facilitating and paying for the relocation of displaced Zimbabweans throughout southern Africa in the late 1990s after the farm invasions. (Comment: We are unaware of the events to which he was referring, but perhaps he was alluding to UN resettlement efforts.) Consistent with his remarks to Deputy AFRICOM Commander Amb Yates in February (ref A), he indicated that the UK especially, but also the United States, had put Mugabe in a corner from which he could not retreat.

[1](#)3. (C) DCM suggested that Zambia, as a beacon of democracy and stability in the region which had made its own democratic transition from one party rule through the ballot box, should be a responsible champion of democracy. Disappointingly, Mulongoti responded with a resigned "our hands are tied" attitude. Refusing even to comment on the election privately, the Information Minister would only say that "you can't choose your neighbors." Zambian passivity on Zimbabwe and Mugabe has been the order of the day since the contentious (and ultimately embarrassing) discussion at the August 2007 SADC Summit in Lusaka when President Mwanawasa attempted to raise the Zimbabwe issue but was shouted down by SADC colleagues (ref B).

[1](#)4. (SBU) On a brighter note, at PAO's request, Minister Mulongoti agreed to an April 11 meeting with visiting Zimbabwean journalists and civil society representatives (organized by PAO Harare).

MARTINEZ